





210

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# The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

By Emily Huntington Miller

"And there were in the same  
country shepherds abiding  
in the field, keeping watch  
over their flocks by night."



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APPARITION TO THE SHEPHERDS

B. PLOCKHORST

*"It was she who said,  
'Fear not,' and I looked up and  
did not fear."*




# The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

Page 1

## SCENE ONE

*Night on the hills above Bethlehem. Three shepherds are in a group; a fourth sits apart, father of the little lad who sits near him with one arm around a shaggy sheep-dog. : : : : :*

OME closer, lad. I like to feel  
you near.

FATHER

My little David—little motherless lamb—

But six tonight, and she a year in  
heaven!

How near the stars are, father. Do  
you think

DAVID

My mother can look down and see  
us here?

Perhaps—it may be so—I cannot  
tell.

FATHER

# The Little Lad of Bethlesem Town

DAVID

And speak to us, because it is my birthday?

FATHER

I do not think so. She would surely speak

Seeing how sad we are with her away.

DAVID

What does she do in heaven?

FATHER

Praise God, and go His errands to and fro.

DAVID

O then she might perchance be sent this way,

And we could see her as she passed along.

Dost think my mother could forget to love us,

Having so many joys in God's great heaven?

FATHER

Not so! O never so! & yet the Rabbis Say it may be the soul goes back to God,

## The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

Page 3

As the drop to the ocean, when the clay  
That held it crumbles to its native  
dust.

My mother was not clay—

What then, dear lad?

DAVID

FATHER

DAVID

I cannot tell. Some soft, sweet, shin-  
ing stuff

That makes the flowers, and bird  
songs, and the sunshine—

What are God's errands, father? Do  
His angels

Feed the wild birds, and paint the  
sunset clouds,

And lead the stars out in a shining  
flock—

And shake the dew down on the grass  
at night,

And fill the little brooks brim full  
of rain

# The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

FATHER

For all the thirsty sheep to come and  
drink?

It might be so. We know they do  
His will

But no eye sees them as they come  
and go—

How light it grows! almost as if the  
dawn

Already had begun—

DAVID

Look, father! See the glory in the  
sky,

As if a door were opened into heaven!

O look! look!

# The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

Page 5

## SCENE TWO

*As the splendor deepens the shepherds fall on their faces and the lad stands gazing upward, silent, but not afraid. The voice cries, "Fear not," and tells of the wondrous birth, and the vision of angels sweeps by with the song of praise. The shepherds slowly rise and look at each other.*

**Y**ou heard it? you and you? and  
saw the angels?

FIRST  
SHEPHERD

Surely no mortal eyes have  
seen such things

Since Jacob slept at Bethel—

Or such a song rang out since first  
the stars

SECOND  
SHEPHERD

Together sang above a new-born  
world.

Come, let us go to Bethlehem, that  
our eyes

May see<sup>the</sup> Hope of Israel, born today,  
And spread the tidings.

# The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

FATHER

But here's the lad, my David—

FIRST  
SHEPHERD

Leave him: he'll sleep; the dog will  
guard him well.

DAVID

O father! take me with you—

FIRST  
SHEPHERD

Or let him stay with Joseph in the lodge  
Down by the olive garden.

DAVID

Father, dear! I will not hinder; I  
will run so fast.

SECOND  
SHEPHERD

We'll soon be back; nothing can  
harm you, lad.

DAVID

Father, you promised. 'Twas my  
birthday treat,  
To watch all night upon the hills  
with you.

FATHER

Well, come; and if you tire I'll  
carry you.

You are no heavier than a yearling  
lamb;

I've often borne one further.

# The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

Page 7

*( On the way—the lad in his father's  
arms.)*

Father, I saw her. It was she who said,  
“Fear not,” and I looked up and  
did not fear.

DAVID

You said she went God's errands;  
might it be

That she was sent to bring the little  
Christ

Down to his mother in the Bethlehem  
town?

Dear lad—

FATHER

She'd bear him well. Her hands are  
strong and soft,

DAVID

And when she strokes your cheek, or  
holds you close

Against her breast—

O David! hush, my lad; you break  
my heart.

FATHER





## The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

Page 9

I saw her in a glory like the sun;  
She said: "Fear not," and all the an-  
gels sang.

Upon the hills?

MARY

Yes, where we watched the sheep.  
You heard the angels, lad? What did  
they sing?

DAVID

I cannot tell. I only saw my  
mother,

MARY

And tried to keep her words fast in  
my heart.

DAVID

She said, "Good tidings of great joy,"  
and then

She smiled at me, the way she used to  
smile

When she had kissed me in my bed at  
night,

And I would shut my eyes so I might  
think

# The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

She was still there, close by me in the dark.

MARY

'Tis not so strange. I, too, have seen an angel;

He spoke to me, and told me wondrous things.

DAVID

May I touch him, the little baby Christ?

MARY

Yes, kiss his hand; see how the tiny fingers

Cling around mine, like little perching birds.

So dear—so sweet—and yet my very own—

Almost I wish that he were born like you

A shepherd lad, to lead the harmless sheep,

So I might fold him in my arms & smile

## The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

Page 11

Without a thought of Herod. Now  
my fear,  
An icy wind, blows through my new-  
born joy  
And chills it to the death, and makes  
me tremble.

Yet God is strong—I will not be  
afraid—

Sleep on, my little son. He'll keep  
you safe,

He'll give His angels charge con-  
cerning you.

*(Mary draws the babe to her bosom  
and sings to him softly.)*

My soul doth magnify the Lord, for  
behold from henceforth all gener-  
ations shall call me blessed—

*(The shepherds go out in silence.)*

# The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

## SCENE FOUR

*The shepherds linger a little in the courtyard of the inn, where groups of people are encamped and a fire burning. David, holding his father's hand, looks at the strange night-scene with wondering eyes. . . . .*

FATHER

THE dawn is near; we should be  
on our way.

The sheep will soon be calling  
from the fold.

FIRST  
SHEPHERD

The sheep! Well, let them call,—  
there's higher work

For us tonight than watching by a  
sheep-fold.

We must go spread the tidings of the  
Christ.

THIRD  
SHEPHERD  
(An older  
man)

The town is full, and both the inns  
o'erflowing,

And Roman soldiers here to speed  
the taxing.

## The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

Page 13

If word were sent to Herod <sup>that</sup> a King  
Was born to Israel, and the Bethle-  
hem town

In a wild tumult, needs no prophet's  
tongue

To say what would befall. Let us go  
homeward,

And praise God as we go.

Aye, you are wise.

God set me to keep sheep, but oft at  
night

I speak with Him, as once King  
David did,

A little shepherd lad on these same  
hills.

I think He cares for all weak, help-  
less things

His hand has made, and so I must  
believe

FATHER

## The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

THIRD  
SHEPHERD  
(musing)

That I can please Him best by doing  
well

The work He gave me, while I sing  
His praise.

A babe—a babe—and I am nigh  
fourscore.

When he is grown I shall sleep with  
my fathers,

And shall not see his triumph, if in-  
deed

This be the Hope of Israel, the  
Messiah.

Well—God be praised for what my  
eyes have seen.

*(Shepherds sing as they go a temple-  
song: Psalm 72.)*

He shall have dominion also from  
sea to sea, and from the river un-  
to the ends of the earth.

## The Little Lad of Bethlehem Town

Page 15

Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.

And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory—

“All nations,” that is what the angel said—

“Good tidings to all people,” and  
“great joy,”

And then she smiled, and went again to God.

DAVID  
(half asleep  
murmurs)

Here endeth THE LITTLE LAD  
OF BETHLEHEM TOWN, being one  
more story of that miraculous  
time when a star shone to mark  
the way to a stable. Told by  
Emily Huntington Miller, who  
is already known as the writer  
of *From Avalon, For the Beloved,*  
*Songs from the West, An Eastern*  
*Vision* and others. Illustrated from  
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he were born like you a  
shepherd lad, to lead  
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sheep."*



H. LEROUX

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